

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 SP-02 NSC-05 INR-05 /038 W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2315

SECDEF

S E C R E T LONDON 09767

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MARR, MILL, PARM, UK, NATO

SUBJECT: FURTHER BRITISH DEFENSE CUTS

REF: LONDON 9764

1. LAST WEEK SIR MICHAEL CARY, PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY MOD, MENTIONED TO DCM STRONG STATEMENT MADE BY SECDEF SCHLESSINGER TO UK SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE MASON DURING MONTEREY NPG MEETING RE US CONCERN FURTHER BRITISH DEFENSE CUTS. AT LUNCHEON WITH AMBASSADOR AND OTHER EMBOFFS ON JUNE 23, MASON HIMSELF REFERRED TO THIS CONVERSATION, SAYING THAT IT HAD BEEN PUT TO HIM AS "OFFICIAL US GOVERNMENT" POSITION AND NOT JUST AS US DOD CONCERN. IT WAS CLEAR THAT BOTH MASON AND CARY WELCOMED THIS STATEMENT AS SUBSTANTIALLY STRENGTHENING THEIR HANDS IN FUTURE CABINET DISCUSSION OF FURTHER CUTS IN UK PUBLIC EXPENDITURES. EMBASSY, UNFORTUNATELY, HAS HAD NO REPORTS ON SUCH A CONVERSATION OR INDICATIONS OF ANY SPECIFIC PRESIDENTIALLY-APPROVED POSITION BEING PUT TO UK EXCEPT THROUGH THESE CONVERSATIONS.

2. LAST NIGHT, JOHN MAYNE (MASON'S PRIVATE SECRETARY) CALLED DCM TO STATE THAT IN YESTERDAY'S CABINET DISCUSSIONS THIS SUBJECT CAME UP AND THAT REPORTED SCHLESSINGER STATEMENT HAD BEEN DISMISSED AS "NATURAL LINE" ONE DEFENSE MINISTER WOULD TAKE WITH ANOTHER (WE ASSUME FROM SECRET

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CONTEXT THAT THIS WAS DENIS HEALEY). MAYNE INDICATED

THAT EMBASSY'S LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF ANY PARTICULAR NEW APPROACH AND FACT THAT STATEMENT HAD BEEN MADE ORALLY ONLY BY ONE DEFENSE MINISTER TO ANOTHER THREATENED TO WEAKEN MASON POSITION IN FORTHCOMING CABINET CONSIDERATION OF HOW PUBLIC EXPENDITURE CUTS WOULD BE "SHARED OUT."

3. MAYNE SUGGESTED THAT EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY WOULD BE PROVIDED BY PROSPECTIVE CALL BY VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER ON PRIME MINISTER WILSON TO TRANSMIT US VIEW ON FURTHER UK DEFENSE CUTS AT UNCHALLENGEABLY AUTHORITATIVE LEVEL. OBVIOUSLY, NO MOD OFFICIAL WOULD WISH TO BE CITED AS SOURCE OF ANY SUCH SUGGESTION.

4. COMMENT: THIS EMBASSY STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THAT VICE PRESIDENT BE PRIMED TO MAKE APPROPRIATELY FORCEFUL STATEMENT ON THIS SUBJECT WHEN HE SEES WILSON NEXT WEEK. MASON WILL NEED ALL THE HELP HE CAN GET IN HOLDING OFF FURTHER EROSION OF DEFENSE BUDGET. CLEARLY UK WILL HAVE TO MAKE FURTHER CUTS IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURES AS PART OF UPCOMING ANTI-INFLATION ECONOMIC PACKAGE AND, AS IN US, PARLIAMENTARIANS' FANCIES TURN TO THOUGHTS OF DEFENSE. WE WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE FULL REPORT ON PRECISELY WHAT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SAID TO MASON ON THIS SUBJECT. IF WE HAD HAD A REPORT ON THIS CONVERSATION, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN IN A BETTER POSITION TO REACT IN A WAY THAT WOULD EFFECTIVELY HAVE SUPPORTED SECDEF'S DEMARCHE. RICHARDSON

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